

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 15, 2016
THIRD HOUSE
MONTAUK COUNTY PARK, NEW YORK**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gilbert Cardillo	Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Kathleen Gooding	Vice Chair, Trustee, Town of Shelter Island
Dawn Hopkins	Chair, Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Peter Leis	Trustee, Town of Islip
Terence McSweeney	Trustee, Town of Babylon
Terrence Pearsall	Member of the Board
William B. Sickles	Trustee, Town of Southampton
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton

ABSENT

Debra Kolyer	Member of the Board
Arthur Leudesdorf	Trustee, Town of Southold
Alexander McKay	Trustee, Town of Huntington
Michael Rosato	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
VACANT	Member at Large

PARKS DEPARTMENT

Philip Berdolt	Acting Commissioner
Adina Beedenbender	Executive Assistant to the Commissioner
Nick Gibbons	Principal Environmental Analyst
Terry Maccarrone	Coordinator of Community Based Programs
Richard Martin	Director of Historic Services
Tony Trotta	Superintendent
Barbara Rittman	Senior Clerk Typist

GUESTS

Legislator Kate Browning	3 rd District
--------------------------	--------------------------

PUBLIC PORTION

Patti Leber, Montauk resident and treasurer of the Third House Nature Center inquired regarding who is responsible for maintaining the road at Culloden Park, as it needs some work. She also inquired about the usage of Third House at Montauk County Park. She commented about many different cultural events that used to be held there, such as Shakespeare in the Park and the Montauk Observatory which has since been moved to the Ross School in East Hampton. She inquired regarding what the current criteria is for activities that can be held at Third House.

Allison Harrington of Montauk stated that she is also involved with Third House Nature Center and helps out with the internship program at East Hampton High School. She stressed how important is for the youth to stay connected with the environment. She added that Montauk CP is very important to the residents and that some of the trails and walkways in the parklands have fallen into disrepair and need maintenance.

Allison stated that since the massive fish kill at Big Reed Pond about eight years ago there has been a blue/green algae condition. Water quality samples have been supplied to Professor Gobler from Stony Brook and he reported that a lot of what is causing the algae is the lack of water flow between Big and Little Reed Ponds, which connects to marshland, Lake Montauk and then flows out to Long Island Sound. Allison commented that she was told that the Peconic Estuary Program is looking into the issue but that it could be quite a lengthy process. The culvert between the ponds is bone dry in the summer and it is a natural migratory route for alewives. The quality of the water has declined so much that it is even choking the phragmites as well. It is believed that opening up the culverts will improve it and Allison is hopeful that it will become a major focus of study.

Stephanie Krusa reported that she is a founding board member of the Third House Nature Center and inquired if the process to have the Third House named as an historic site has been investigated. Richard Martin, director of Historic Services for Suffolk County responded that the entire park (including all of its buildings) has been declared eligible for the national register by New York State, and his division is currently working on the nomination process. Richard reported that it is a very time consuming nomination due to all of the cultural and Native American history involved and that an archeologist working on it as well.

Stephanie inquired if there is a timeframe for completing the interior of the Third House. Richard Martin stated that the Department of Public Works put out a Request for Proposals for a sprinkler system to be installed in the building as part of fulfilling the code for public assembly in the building. The consultant is currently working on the plans and the contract is being drawn.

Stephanie inquired about the Camp Soulgrow program at Third House and if rent is being paid for use of the facility. She reported that the Third House Nature Center started in 1992 and the group used to meet at Third House in the front office area and Saturday morning meetings and programs were held for the school children of Montauk. It was later changed to an after school program, and nature programming is still provided to 15-20 local school children. Selected high school seniors in the intern program receive sizeable scholarships. The students study and list all of the flora and fauna growing in the park, as well as monitor the different species of fish and any changes in the blue-green algae on the lake.

Stephanie expressed concern about the condition of the bridges, walkways and bike hostel in the park that she used quite a lot when her children were small because it was such a great place for camping.

Gregory Donohue spoke highly of the success of the Shakespeare at the Park program that used to be held at Third House about five years ago. The theme of arts on the property was very appealing to many people and he asked for consideration in having Third House used as a cultural arts center for theatre, poetry readings, artwork, sculpture, etc.

Jessica James stated that she is a volunteer EMT with the Montauk Fire Department and is also vice chair of a local environmental group, Concerned Citizens of Montauk. She spoke to the fact that over the years there has been less and less public access for usage of Third House. She stressed the importance of the public being able to use the facilities of the park, especially the interiors and feels strongly that it should be addressed. Community groups such as the Boy Scouts were at one time able to use the facilities for pot lucks and holiday parties. Many community meetings could be held there if it were permitted because the library and fire house are the only other locations in Montauk to hold them. Jessica stated that she belongs to an amateur radio club that used to have its annual events at Third House and the group even had access to one or two of the cabins as well. It would run for a weekend and ham radio competitions were held. Some club members came from out of town and slept on the premises in order to participate in the event. She added also that she feels the community should be able to use the cabins for camping.

Jessica added that she had heard that Cornell Cooperative Extension may have interest in possibly doing some programming at Montauk County Park. The combination of science and nature for research could be a good fit since there is no commercial agriculture in Montauk. There are many appropriate and unique uses for the park and Jessica is hoping that they will all be considered.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 18, 2016

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Trustee White and seconded by Acting Commissioner Philip Berdolt. The minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Legislator Kate Browning stated that she represents the Yaphank community and reported that the Trap & Skeet Range is still an ongoing problem. The lawsuit by the Town of Brookhaven regarding the noise ordinance is moving forward and there should be an outcome soon. Legislator Browning reported that she spoke with the Pine Barrens Commission to get advice on what could be done with that property other than a shooting range. In the meantime, the local residents are still being impacted with the noise and Legislator Browning requested that the Parks Trustees re-visit the situation. Legislator Browning stated that she would like to arrange a meeting with Congressman Zeldin regarding the matter.

Legislator Browning stated that the situation with access of the Smith Point County Park outer beach gets worse every year. Residents pay for permits to use the beach and the majority of the summer they are not permitted access until the end of August. Legislator Browning stated that she would like to arrange a meeting with Congressman Zeldin and US Fish & Wildlife. At the last legislative meeting held, there were local fishermen and businesses represented who stressed the great impact this has had on their businesses. Some have suffered up to a 52% reduction in revenue due to the outer beach being closed. Legislator Browning suggested selling a punch card as an alternative so that people could use it a specified number of times per year.

Philip Berdolt introduced himself as the present Acting Suffolk County Parks Commissioner. He is hoping to be officially appointed by the Legislature on October 5th. He thanked the group for attending the meeting and stated that Third House is a beautiful County Park. He added that he plans to make it a priority to work with staff to get the building to code for public assembly. The sprinkler system will be installed first, and any other requirements will follow.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Hopkins asked for an update on the Blueway Trail. Adina Beedenbender reported that the Parks Department is waiting to hear back from Legislator Hahn's office regarding the grant from the state. All letters of support were submitted.

Chair Hopkins inquired about the dumping issue at West Hills County Park. Acting Commissioner Berdolt reported that the park is located in a very secluded area and that it appears as though it was done recently, possibly at night. The District Attorney's office is currently investigating and the material will be tested next week. All of the horses, with the exception of a few were removed from the property until testing determines the content and whether it is unsafe or toxic for animals. The remainder of the horses will be removed by Friday.

Chair Hopkins reported on the meeting of the Lake Ronkonkoma Advisory Board held the evening before. Some of the community residents in attendance were very passionate about the condition of the lake. Legislator Cilmi was also present at the meeting and reported that the steps from Vanderbilt Avenue would be looked into

and taken care of. Chair Hopkins stated concern that a resident announced that the broken up concrete steps would be removed during the upcoming weekend. Nick Gibbons reported that the Eastview steps are part of a Town of Islip roadway. The sidewalk ends at the top of an embankment where the concrete steps are and some have begun to break off into the lake. Over time, the steps have eroded away, creating a gap in the structure. Nick stated that he notified the Town of Islip to advise that it is their responsibility to clear away the remaining structure. Earlier this year, Nick had the sidewalk repaired and several trees removed that were severely damaged. The right of way bisects two county parcels on either side. Interested constituents can follow up with the Town of Islip.

Acting Commissioner Berdolt reported that Legislator Kennedy was also in attendance at the meeting and concerned about anyone attempting to remove the bookstore retaining walls, and the road crumbling. However, he stated that removing them would be a big job and he didn't feel that anyone would attempt it.

Chair Hopkins reported that there were 75-80 residents who participated in a lake clean-up and approximately ten thousand pounds of debris was collected. She added that she is pleased that there is community concern for taking care of the lake.

Chair Hopkins provided an update on the SUNY Oneonta program for a Master of Science in Lake Management which is the only program in this country that provides a degree of this kind. Lake Ronkonkoma is one of approximately twenty-six lakes chosen to have a graduate student for the next two years work on developing a waterfront management plan for the lake. The project includes meeting with stake holders, doing surveys for stake holders, as well as providing options on how to take care of the lake, what plans will need to go into action and some of the cost factors. The student will work on this for two years and the Ronkonkoma Lake Foundation will for the first time provide \$4,000.00 for the first year for the student. Next year, there will be a fundraiser for the second \$4,000.00. Chair Hopkins is very enthusiastic about the program. The graduate student will be coming to Lake Ronkonkoma with the chairman of his program on October 7th. The student is from Lake Ronkonkoma and Chair Hopkins is very hopeful that he will select this lake for his studies. It is a very competitive program and twelve graduate students are participating.

Acting Commissioner Berdolt reported that the goose situation also contributes to the pollution of the lake. There were many complaints about the numbers of geese at the Dennison Building in Hauppauge and he teamed up with Cornell Cooperative Extension to do oiling which turned out to be very effective. Nick Gibbons reported that he will be looking into doing this around Lake Ronkonkoma next year, in areas where geese are nesting.

ROUND TABLE

Nick Gibbons addressed some of the questions that came up during the Public Portion of the meeting. He stated that Culloden Park is jointly managed by Suffolk County and the Town of East Hampton. The Town of East Hampton is seeking to secure a grant to relocate the staircase and the observation platform, and maintenance of the road leading up to that spot is the responsibility of East Hampton. Nick added that he works closely with Natural Resources Town of East Hampton. In most instances, the town Highway Department works closely with the Natural Resources Department and if the county needs assistance for a county roadway, we contact Suffolk County Public Works.

At Big Reed Pond, the bridge work and trail work was done by the Parks Department. The county is very appreciative for assistance and interest from the Trails Preservation Society when the trails become overgrown.

Replacement of the entire boardwalk system is ongoing. The county is more likely to replace boards as needed rather than entire structures. The county does recognize that it is an important recreational resource in Montauk.

Nick stated that he is aware of the Big Reed/Little Reed Pond culvert. It was brought to his attention by a letter he received from the Third House Nature Center about a year ago and he brought it to the attention of Public Works because they oversee the mosquito ditches and culverts on many county properties. DPW has the equipment to clean them out and this is on their list to address. Nick added that there is also interest by the Peconic Estuary Program which is a county/state joint agency. They are also interested in the migrating alewife population and getting the water flow improved.

Nick explained that there was some interest in Cornell Cooperative Extension using Third House, and Nick and Richard Martin met with them about two years ago. Nick wasn't sure if the location met with Cornell's needs since they haven't come forward to make a proposal. The geographic location could also have been problematic.

Regarding the bike hostel, Nick reported that it does still exist and he will go take a look at it to see how it is being maintained. There is a new Park Supervisor who started in the beginning of the summer so he is still getting acclimated to the whole area and facilities within the park.

Legislator Browning stated that it is her first visit to the Third House building and agrees with the idea of artists using the building for retreats and also possibly as a youth hostel.

Trustee McSweeney reported that he just recently met with some local residents regarding the Van Bourgondien house in West Babylon and the West Babylon Beautification Society would like to plant some trees on the property. A group of neighbors attended a meeting with Legislator McCaffrey and communicated that they would like to get the property around the house irrigated because the grass burns out so much during the summer months.

Trustee Cardillo reported that work at the new check-in building at Indian Island CP has resumed. Trustee Cardillo inquired if swimming is permitted at Lake Ronkonkoma CP. Chair Hopkins stated that it is only permitted at the Town of Islip beach.

Trustee Sickles inquired about reinstituting prescribed burns in the Town of East Hampton as it had been considered several years ago. Nick reported that the county had entered into an agreement with the Nature Conservancy to begin burns in county parks back at the time and then the Nature Conservancy notified the county that they were not going to continue with the program. Just obtaining the finalized agreement was a 2-3 year process and the county doesn't have the infrastructure, personnel or equipment to attempt the process alone. There must be a mutual commitment.

Trustee Sickles stated that at one time there was a restoration of the grassland community at Orient Point CP. The Parks Department has been maintaining trails there but when Trustee Sickles recently visited the park it had become quite overgrown. Nick stated that there is a 290 acre grassland management area that was approved by the county and staff does get there to mow but it takes constant maintenance. There are 2-3 fulltime employees working at the East End parks now and they will be shown the areas that are in need of maintenance during the fall off-season.

Trustee Sickles inquired about the RFP (Request for Proposals) for the Cedar Point store and whether the timeframe for getting the proposals back had passed. Trustee White is sitting on that committee and reported

that he had received the packet. He was advised that sometime in October there would be a meeting with the individuals who filled out the RFP paperwork.

Trustee Gooding welcomed Acting Commissioner Berdolt and she is looking forward to working with him.

Trustee White thanked Acting Commissioner Berdolt for placing Third House on his list of priorities because there is such a huge community interest in it. Several members of the community took time to attend the meeting to express some of their frustrations and the length of time it has taken to get projects completed.

The next Parks Trustee meeting will be held at Blydenburgh County Park in Smithtown on Thursday, October 20, 2016.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee White and was seconded by Trustee Sickles. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.